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ABSTRACT

To assure the fair and honest grading of student achievement, validity and reliability are key to writing test items. Clarity in writing each item is essential. Multiple procedures of assessing the achievement of university students should be implemented, and instructors and professors should be held accountable for the fair and honest grading of student achievement. Input from students is important in assuring a fair test, and educational technology should be used to improve the testing process when possible. (SLD)

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Problems in Grading Based on Testing University Students

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PROBLEMS IN GRADING BASED ON TESTING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract

Validity and reliability are key terms to emphasize in writing test items. Clarity in writing each test item is important and vital. Multiple procedures of assessing university student achievement should be in the offing. It is salient for instructors/professors to be accountable for fair and honest grading of student achievement.

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A professor should always study the computerized print out of student test scores. Item analysis is then involved. If multiple choice test items were used, content from the print out will state how many students got each test item right. If all were correct in responding to a test item, was it excessively easy? Perhaps a student could respond to this test item and others without any effort in studying for the class and for the test.

If all missed a test item, did the multiple choice test item lack clarity? With many missing a multiple choice test item, the following need analyzing:

1. The test item was not valid.
2. The test item was worded using highly complex terminology.

The professor always should use psychology of teaching tenets in the instructional process, including

1. Making learnings interesting to students. The interests of students develop effort for learning. Tapping the interests of learners assist the latter to achieve vital objectives of instruction. Instructors always need to think of and implement plans to secure student attention.
2. Making learnings purposeful. To obtain student purpose, the university instructor needs to explain briefly the worth of achieving valuable ideas to be used in teaching. Guiding students to perceive reasons for learning is certainly worthwhile. Students attend better to the learning opportunities as well as prize more highly what has been learned.
3. Making knowledge and skills meaningful to students. To attach meaning to what has been learned means that students understand and can apply that which has been learned.

Among other variables, students should achieve more optimally when university instructors follow the above named criteria. In addition, a caring, accepting, and responsible instructor is needed to guide learner progress in academic and personal achievement. Each criterion from the psychology of learning, if followed in teaching, may

be evaluated by the instructor himself/herself or by peers. A five point scale covering these criteria may be used (Ediger, 2000, 244-249).

Also, the instructor needs to be a student of using proper standards in developing tests and of measurement and statistics. Thus to write quality multiple choice test items, the university instructor must make certain that each of the four distractors are plausible and meaningful. One ridiculous distractor can be immediately detected. The student then chooses the correct response from three, not four distractors. If only two of the four possible responses are plausable, then, in a reality, a true/false item is in evidence.

True/false test items have merit if the student corrects that portion of the false portion of the statement.

The author has always used multiple procedures to assess student progress, not testing alone, to grade students in a course. Thus, the following student developed items may also be assessed in terms of desired, quality criteria:

1. Teaching aids made for student teaching and regular teaching. Thus, puppets and a puppet stage, models, teaching charts with illustrations, construction items, dioramas, collages, and friezes may be made by students.
2. Teaching suggestions in booklet form with appropriate organization for ease in classroom use. Each teaching suggestion is footnoted as to its source.
3. A detailed lesson plan developed and used in teaching a mini-lesson in class. The mini-lesson and its related unit plan is assessed by peers and the instructor (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Seven).

When using multiple methods of assessment, the student has a better means of revealing what has been learned, as compared to responding to multiple choice test items largely or only. The author has noticed that selected students do not achieve A grades in testing, but are A+ students in teaching mini-lessons and later in the student teaching program. A student in the university class may also show high proficiency in showing achievement in teaching aids made, as compared to personal test results. Students differ from each other in intelligences possessed (see Gardner, 1993). Thus, a student may reveal what has been learned in any course by using personal intelligences possessed. Rubrics may be used, with clearly defined standards, to assess each product/process shown in learning within a course.

Essay tests are easier to write as compared to multiple choice tests. However, the grading of student responses is complex due to subjectivity involved. Machine scoring cannot be used and a single numeral, such as a

percentile, is not provided. Rather, the instructor must read each student response. Problems involved include the following:

1. Legibility in student handwriting.
2. Proper organization in terms of coherent and sequential paragraphs.
3. Correct spelling of words and correct punctuation.
4. Meaningful written content which makes sense.
5. Writing in a non-voluminous way with clarity of content. Repetitious writing is not to be encouraged (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Six).

The instructor needs to have a predetermined key which indicates desired subject matter for any one question on the essay test. He/she needs to determine how many points are possible if any one question is answered correctly. A separate grade may be given for the mechanics of writing, such as correct spelling of words, among others.

It would be good to have another assessor of the same essay tests to notice inter-scorer reliability. If a team is teaching the class, this is definitely feasible.

Fair, objective scoring and grading of student achievement needs to be in evidence. If there are many essay tests to assess, the instructor needs to watch the fatigue factor which hinders in quality evaluation.

Student confidence and respect needs to be in the offing for grades received in each course taken. The grades received by a student is involved in developing the self-concept and are available to employers. Thus, it is vital that each student is graded carefully and meticulously. The instructor's reputation is also on the line when student grades are received. The student must work diligently in each class to obtain the best grades possible, whereas the instructor must be an accountable person in the grading process.

Conclusion

University instructors have multiple criteria to consider when assessing students and giving/providing grades. The following items need to be considered:

1. Validity in evaluation. Do the test items or rubric used truly reflect what has been covered in a course?
2. Clarity of test items and criteria used in the assessment process. Are these test items and criteria clear to the test taker and involved university student?
3. Input from students. How much should students be involved in assessing the self, such as in student

assessment of the instructional quality in a given course? The self-evaluation device, to be used by students may be written by the instructor or commercially purchased by the university.

4. Increased use should be made of technology in the assessment process, such as the internet in students responding to test items as well as corresponding with the instructor by e-mail.

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